

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00 SSO-00
INRE-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00 EB-08 COME-00 /069 W
-----077091 151620Z /47

O 151456Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3586
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMEMBASSY BONN
DIA
AOMCONSUL GENOA 2592
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
SHAPEUSNR
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY
USDOCOSOUTH
USMISSION USNATO

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USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

SHAPEUSNR FOR POLAD

SHAPE PLS PASS AMBASSADOR GARDNER

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PFOR,IT, PINT
SUBJECT: PCI CALL FOR PRESIDENT LEONE'S RESIGNATION

1. FOLLOWING THE RECENT RENEWAL OF ACCUSATIONS IN PRESS OF
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IMPROPER BEHAVIOR OF PRESIDENT LEONE, PCI DIRECTORATE
MET ON JUNE 15 AND ISSUED A STATEMENT CALLING FOR THE PRESIDENT'S
RESIGNATION IN ORDER TO STOP THE "SPECULATION THAT SURROUNDS
THE HIGHEST OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC/// (AND) TO GUARANTEE THE
STABILITY AND THE CORRECT FUNCTIONING OF OUR DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTIONS."

2. THE SOCIALIST-ORIENTED WEEKLY, ESPRESSO, HAS IN THE LAST TWO ISSUES REVIVED OLD CHARGES AGAINST PRESIDENT LEONE AND HIS FAMILY. THESE RELATE TO THE PROFITEERING ON CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS, FISCAL EVASION, INVOLVEMENT OF SOME SORT IN THE LOCKHEED SCANDAL THROUGH HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE LE FEBVRE BROTHERS, ILLEGAL MOVEMENTS OF CAPITAL, AND ASSORTED OTHER IMPROPER USES OF THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE IN BUSINESS DEALINGS CONDUCTED BY HIS FRIENDS, ESPECIALLY THE LE FEBVRE BROTHERS. THESE CHARGES HAVE BEEN REPLAYED IN THE ITALIAN DAILY PRESS ALTHOUGH SOMEWHAT CAUTIOUSLY.

4. DC LEADERS ANDREOTTI AND ZACCAGNINI REPORTEDLY MET WITH THE PRESIDENT LAST NIGHT. THERE WAS ANOTHER UNSCHEDULED MEETING OF DC LEADERS AT NOON, TODAY. THE DC HAS DECLINED TO COMMENT PUBLICLY ON THESE MEETINGS, BUT IT IS CLEAR FROM THE GUARDED COMMENTS OF BARTOLOMEI AND PICCOLI THAT LEONE WAS DISCUSSED AND THAT AT LEAST THESE TWO DC LEADERS ARE TAKING THEIR DISTANCE FROM LEONE.

5. YESTERDAY (JUNE 14) LA MALFA, IN RESPONSE TO A REPORTER'S QUESTION, REPEATED HIS PUBLICLY STATED VIEW OF ONE YEAR AGO THAT LEONE SHOULD RESIGN.

6. THE REASON FOR PCI' SUDDEN AND BLUNT MOVE IS NOT CLEAR SINCE LEONE'S RESIGNATION WILL INEVITABLY THREATEN A CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT IN PARLIAMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHICH THE PCI HAS SHOWN NO PREVIOUS INTEREST IN CHANGING OR MODIFYING. SPECULATION IN POLITICAL CIRCLES IN ROME HAS BEEN THAT SOME SOCIALISTS WERE BEHIND THE RENEWED ATTACKS ON LEONE, BUT FOR REASONS THAT WERE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR.

7. LEONE HAS REMAIED SILENT, AND HIS INTENTIONS ARE UNKNOWN. SHOULD HE RESIGN, A JOINT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE CONVOKED WITHIN FIFTEEN DAYS TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT. THIS WOULD OBVIOUSLY ELIMINATE OR SHARPLY CURTAIL THE SO-CALLED "WHITE SEMESTER" WHICH NORMALLY PREVENTS THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT FOR SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT. IN THE ABSENCE OF LEONE'S RESIGNATION, THE WHITE SEMESTER WOULD BEGIN ON JUNE 24 IN ANTICIPATION OF LEONE'S TERM RUNNING OUT ON DECEMBER 24. HOLMES

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